

INSPECTION REPORT

CHRISTLETON HIGH SCHOOL

Christleton

Chester

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111421

Headteacher: Mr G I Lawson

Reporting inspector: Mr D P Cox
Rgl's OIN: 10297

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th November 2000

Inspection number: 223968

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Christleton High School Village Road Christleton Chester
Postcode:	CH3 7AD
Telephone number:	01244 335843
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Burton
Date of previous inspection:	14 November 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Christleton High School is bigger than most other secondary schools, and is a mixed 11 to 18 comprehensive school, situated in the village of Christleton, on the outskirts of Chester. The school operates on a single site. The campus also contains a leisure centre and swimming pool. There are 1230 students on roll with 214 students in the sixth form. The number of students on roll is similar to that noted in the previous inspection report.

The school has a slightly higher than average number of students from ethnic minorities; there are 27 students for whom English is an additional language. Whilst the school attracts students from a wide spread of abilities the ability of students on entry is above average. There are 59 students on the special educational needs register, this is 4.7 per cent of the school population and is well below the national average. There are 13(1 per cent) students with statements of special educational need, which is well below the national average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average at 6 per cent. The socio-economic circumstances of the students are well above average.

The school aims are relevant and are in the school prospectus. The school was last inspected in November 1994.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. The very good quality teaching, combined with the students' very good attitudes, ensure that students' levels of attainment are improved significantly whilst they are at the school. The very good leadership provided by the headteacher and other senior members of staff is successful in bringing about a commitment to ensuring that all students achieve well. The school is providing very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students attain well above average standards and their achievement is very good.
- Most of the teaching is of a high quality; teachers create a purposeful and disciplined environment for learning.
- There is very good and effective leadership from the headteacher, senior staff and governors, which provides the school with a clear direction and enables the students to attain high standards.
- The financial management of the school is excellent.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and their personal development is very good.
- The school cares for the students as individuals - form tutors know their students well.

What could be improved

- The school needs to extend its system of self-review to ensure that the monitoring and support of teaching becomes sufficiently rigorous.
- The monitoring of the work of subjects is not systematic.
- There is an unsatisfactory system for the identification, assessment and monitoring of the progress of students with special educational needs (SEN).
- The annual written reports to parents on their child's performance do not always inform parents about the achievements and progress that their child has made.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in November 1994. Results at GCSE and GCE A-level have remained at a high level. The overall quality of teaching has improved from good to very good and this has ensured that students continue to achieve very well at the school. Improvements have been made to the accommodation. The progress made by the school is a result of the very good leadership provided by the headteacher, the governing body and senior staff to promote an ethos of high

expectation that permeates the school. The emphasis that the school's management has placed on improving teaching and learning has led to a very good teaching provision, which ensures that standards are well above the national average in GCSE and GCE A-level. The school's response to the key issues identified in the previous report has been good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A	A	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
Very high	A*

Students arrive at the school with levels of attainment that are above the level expected nationally, although there are also high and low attaining students who join the school in Year 7. Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9. Results in the national tests for 14 years olds in 2000 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, results were very high in mathematics and science and place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally; results were well above average in English. When all three subjects are taken together, results were well above average when compared with all schools and very high when compared with similar schools and place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.

Students continue to achieve very well in Years 10 to 11. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above the national average when compared with all schools and with similar schools. The school sets challenging targets for the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and A*-G and was successful in attaining these. Results were well above average in most subjects, with students performing particularly well in drama where all students entered obtained at least a GCSE grade C, with one-third of students obtaining the very highest grade of A*.

In the 2000 GCE A-level and GNVQ examinations, students' results were well above the national average. Students achieve very well. The proportion of students obtaining a pass at the highest grades rose significantly in 2000.

In work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students are well above the level expected nationally. Students' levels of literacy and numeracy are also well above the level expected nationally.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are enthusiastic about school and learning. Most have very good attitudes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is good in and around the school. The number of fixed term exclusions is below average.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students show a good deal of respect for the opinions of others. Students develop very well as independent learners.

Attendance	Good overall. The level of attendance is well above the national average. A small number of students are not always punctual to lessons.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is very good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons; good or better in 71 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 36 per cent of lessons. Teaching of the very highest standard was seen in 5 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is a significant strength of the school and leads to many students achieving very well.

The very good management of students and the varied teaching methods adopted engage students' interest and help them to work productively. Many teachers provide clear explanations of new ideas. Praise is used well. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is well developed because there is a consistent approach throughout the curriculum. In lessons, typically, there is an atmosphere in which the relationships between teachers and students are very good and a disciplined environment is created. The behaviour of the students is good and the students work hard and with concentration. Students are keen to learn. Occasionally, teachers do not make the full use of the 70-minute period. In some instances there is not a crisp start to the lesson and in others the teaching finishes before the warning bell for the end of the lesson. Teachers provide a very good range of worthwhile extra-curricular activities for students. These activities directly extend students' experience and learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory and it is good in Years 12 to 13.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory, however the structures and systems used in identifying and assessing these students are currently unsatisfactory.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Students with English as an additional language do not have any difficulty in accessing the full curriculum.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The provision for moral and social development in particular is very good
How well the school cares for its students	Standards of care are good. This is a caring school where staff know the students well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: This is a school that is maintaining high standards. The headteacher and senior management team are very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The monitoring of the school's performance is very thorough. The monitoring of the implementation of the school's policies is less rigorous.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Resources are very carefully deployed to those areas where they will provide the greatest benefit. The school applies the principles of best value extremely well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching is very good. • The standards that students attain and the progress that they make. • The school is well led and managed. • Students have positive attitudes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents being kept better informed about how their child is progressing. • The school setting a more appropriate amount of work to be done at home. • The school working more closely with parents.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The standards that students attain are well above the national average and students achieve very well at the school overall. Students have very good attitudes. The quality of management is very good overall.

The inspection team found that the annual written reports to parents on their child's performance do not always inform parents about the achievements and progress that their child has made. The school does set a good deal of appropriate homework, which supports and extends students. The school does work closely with parents; it is approachable and welcoming.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Students attain well above average standards and their achievement is very good.

1. Students arrive at the school with levels of attainment that are above the level expected nationally, although there are also high and low attaining students who join the school in Year 7. Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9. Results in the national tests for 14 years olds in 2000 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, results were very high in mathematics and science and place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally; results were well above average in English. When all three subjects are taken together, results were well above average when compared with all schools and very high when compared with similar schools and place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
2. Students continue to achieve very well in Years 10 to 11. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above the national average when compared with all schools and with similar schools. The school sets challenging targets for the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and A*-G and was successful in attaining these. Results were well above average in most subjects, with students performing particularly well in drama where all students entered obtained at least a GCSE grade C, with one-third of students obtaining the very highest grade of A*.
3. In the 2000 GCE A-level and GNVQ examinations, students' results were well above the national average. Students achieve very well. The proportion of students obtaining a pass at the highest grades rose significantly in 2000.
4. In work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students are well above the level expected nationally. For example, in a Year 9 art class, students created images through manipulation and distortion techniques with excellent attention to detail.
5. Students' levels of literacy and numeracy are also well above the level expected nationally. Teachers insist on correct terminology when students are answering questions, both orally and in writing. Many classrooms have displays of words that students are expected to learn and use in their work and many teachers make use of support 'frameworks' that promote the development of writing skills. Numeracy skills are also well developed across the curriculum. For instance, in science, students are provided with many opportunities to practise using calculations and data analysis techniques.

Most of the teaching is of a high quality; teachers create a purposeful and disciplined environment for learning.

6. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is very good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons; good or better in 71 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 36 per cent of lessons. Teaching of the very highest standard was seen in 5 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is a significant strength of the school and leads to many students achieving very well.
7. In lessons, typically, there is an atmosphere in which the relationships between teachers and students are very good and a disciplined environment created. The behaviour of the students is good and the students work hard and with concentration. Students are keen to learn.
8. The very good management of students and the varied teaching methods adopted engage students' interest and help them to work productively. In a Year 9 history lesson, the excellent subject knowledge of the teacher and a lively exposition ensured that the students responded well and worked at pace. Very good control of the class ensured that all of the students concentrated fully. In a Year 13 physics class, the skilled use of questioning probed the students' understanding and the teacher did not accept superficial answers or comments. This contributed effectively to the students' understanding of temperature scales.

9. Many teachers provide clear explanations of new ideas. This was seen to excellent effect in a Year 7 mathematics class focusing on the consolidation and learning of number sequences. Skilled use was made of structured exercises and students engaged well with a variety of oral tasks, which reinforced the recognition of sequences. Good use was made of resources in a carefully structured lesson, which included a wide variety of interesting tasks. In a Year 13 French class, the varied opportunities for the students to practise the use of the correct vocabulary in the correct grammatical context ensured that they learned the vocabulary systematically. The students listened well and responded in French whenever possible. Praise was used well.
10. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is well developed because there is a consistent approach throughout the curriculum. Across the whole curriculum many opportunities for teaching and improving standards of literacy and numeracy are provided.
11. Occasionally, teachers do not make the full use of the 70-minute period. In some instances there is not a crisp start to the lesson and in others teaching finishes before the warning bell for the end of the lesson.
12. Teachers provide a very good range of worthwhile extra-curricular activities for students. These activities directly extend students' experience and learning, for example the range of music activities. Residential experience is well provided and enjoyed by many students. For example, the induction course for Year 12 students.

There is very good and effective leadership from the headteacher, senior staff and governors, which provides the school with a clear direction and enables the students to attain high standards.

13. One of the main reasons for the success of the school is the very good and effective leadership of the headteacher. The senior management team and a well-informed governing body ably support him. The school has a clear sense of direction and a purposeful atmosphere in which all students are encouraged to give of their best and achieve high academic and personal standards. The school is rich in performance data and uses this well to improve the high standards that it achieves. Examination results are analysed in detail and teachers are fully aware of how well students should be achieving. The results of this approach are clear in the improvement in teaching and the continued success in external examinations.
14. The governing body is very effective. It has established close links with the school. This has enabled governors to gain expertise and an understanding of the work of the school, and a good insight into the school's strengths. The committee structure is effective in supporting both short-term and long-term planning, and scrutinising the work of the school and the standards being achieved.

The financial management of the school is excellent.

15. The income per student is broadly average. The school fully applies the principles of 'best value' and uses a wide range of appropriate advisers and representatives to help with decision-making and the monitoring and evaluation of its work. The funding available has consistently been very tight and has required very careful financial planning over many years. There is rarely any substantial funding available for new projects once teaching and other fixed costs have been accounted for.

Students have very positive attitudes to their work and their personal development is very good.

16. Students have enquiring minds and seek to improve their standard of work. In many of the lessons observed, students' attitudes were very positive. They want to learn, and enter into partnership with their teachers to do so. They listen to their teachers and to each other responsibly and maturely in almost all lessons. They contribute well, and show respect for others in their relationships in lessons.

17. Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They respect the rules, and show a high level of responsibility. The level of exclusions is below average. Overall, students have very positive attitudes to their work. For example, students in Years 12 and 13 act most responsibly. They follow the rules concerning use of time for private study, and they do not waste their time. They have a strong sense of purpose and want to achieve high standards. Year 12 and 13 students contribute well to community service, including support and counselling for younger students.
18. The personal development of students is very good. They form very constructive relationships with one another and with teachers and other adults in the school. They work well together in lessons. Around the school they are generally sensible in the way that they behave and respond to each other. Students develop well as independent learners.
19. The level of attendance is well above the national average and students enjoy attending the school. However, a small number of students are not always punctual to lessons.

The school cares for the students as individuals - form tutors know their students well.

20. The school has an effective and supportive pastoral system. Appropriate child protection arrangements are in place and the school gives care and attention to health and safety issues. Form tutors know their students well. Students felt that they were able to discuss problems with their form tutors and that there was always someone in the school that they could discuss any problems with. Students are very well supported in their educational and career choices, good information is provided by tutors about options and the implications of subject choices. Careers advisers guide students and parents' well, ensuring that decisions about choices are properly informed. Advice and support for students in the Sixth Form are equally effective, students being very well prepared for the transition to higher education or employment.
21. The school has good curriculum links with its partner primary schools which eases the transition for pupils. The school has strong links with the business community and uses a variety of methods to inform students about the workplace. Community involvement is demonstrated by students raising over £4000 annually for a variety of charities.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school needs to extend its system of self-review to ensure that the monitoring and support of teaching becomes sufficiently rigorous.

22. Whilst the overall quality of teaching is very good, there are pockets of teaching that are not as good as the very best practice observed during the inspection. Currently, the system for monitoring the quality of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous and this leads to a small proportion of lessons being less challenging and productive.

The monitoring of the work of subjects is not systematic.

23. The school has many good policies. However, these policies are not always applied consistently. The monitoring of the work of subjects is not systematic and this leads to the inconsistent application of whole-school policies such as the marking policy. The scrutiny of students' work indicates that occasionally marking is not sufficiently rigorous and does not inform students how their work might be improved.

There is an unsatisfactory system for the identification, assessment and monitoring of the progress of students with special educational needs (SEN).

24. Currently, the school does not have due regard to the requirements of the Code of Practice in that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are not in place for all students who need them. The current IEPs do not identify appropriate targets nor the arrangements which need to be made to suit the individual student. They do not describe the arrangements made to monitor and review progress and ensure the student's entitlement is met. However, the school has recently appointed a special educational needs co-ordinator who has identified many of the areas of concern noted above.

The annual written reports to parents on their child's performance do not always inform parents about the achievements and progress that their child has made.

25. In the responses to the parents' questionnaire, a significant minority of parents was not happy with the information that they receive on their child's progress. The scrutiny of reports confirmed that comments are bland in some subjects. They fail to adequately describe what students have learnt or to evaluate the progress that the students have made, tending instead to comment on attitude and effort.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To raise further the quality of education provided, the governors and the senior management team should:

- Extend the school's system of self-review to ensure monitoring and support of teaching becomes sufficiently rigorous (para 22).
- Ensure that the work of subjects is monitored more systematically (para 23).
- Continue the good work already started by the special educational needs co-ordinator in identifying, assessing and monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs (para 24).
- Provide annual written reports to parents on their child's performance that inform parents about the achievements and progress that their child has made (para 25).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	31	35	29	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1016	214
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	61	N/a

Special educational needs

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	12	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	58	1

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	27

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	146	158	204

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	94	85
	Girls	93	87	87
	Total	178	181	172
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (78)	90 (85)	85 (80)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	43(33)	68(68)	54(56)
	National	28(28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	92	85
	Girls	90	91	85
	Total	173	183	170
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (91)	91 (85)	84(85)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	51(56)	71 (66)	56(55)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29(28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	112	85	197

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	73	110	111
	Girls	63	85	85
	Total	136	195	196
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	69 (67)	99 (97)	99(99)
	National	49 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	95.5 (95.8)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	47.6 (46)
	National	38.7 (38)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	45	68	113

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	22.6	22.8	22.7 (19.2)	0.5	3	2.4 (2.9)
National	N/a	N/a	N/a (17.9)	N/a	N/a	N/a (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	7	100
	National		(82.5)

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	8
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	1219
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	20	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	73.3
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	234

Deployment of teachers: Y7- Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7- Y11

Key Stage 3	25.8
Key Stage 4	21.9

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2952929
Total expenditure	2928405
Expenditure per student	2356
Balance brought forward from previous year	1459
Balance carried forward to next year	25983

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1230
Number of questionnaires returned	440

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	10	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	52	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	58	11	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	59	15	4	1
The teaching is good.	24	65	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	54	22	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	51	8	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	44	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	15	58	20	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	29	55	6	3	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	59	7	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	47	16	3	8